
FY13 Q1 Report: June 15 -September 2013**Submitted: October 31, 2013**

The Southeast Economic Recovery and Protection Project (SERAP)

Funded by USAID / Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)

COUNTRY CONTACT	HEADQUARTERS CONTACT	PROJECT SUMMARY
Su'ad JARBAWI Country Director Address: Avenue de l'Indépendance Quartier des évolués, SICA I Bangui, Central African Republic Telephone: + 236 70 93 32 38 Email sjarbawi@field.mercycorps.org	Katherine Daniels Senior Program Officer Address: 45 SW Ankeny Street Portland, OR 97204 Telephone: +1 503 896 5802 Email: kdaniels@mercycorps.org	Award No: AID-OFDA-G-13-00093 Start Date: June 15, 2013 End Date: June 14, 2014 Report Date: October 31 st , 2013 Total Award: USD \$731,392

1. Executive Summary

In June 2013, USAID/OFDA funded the Southeast Economic Recovery and Protection Project (SERAP) to respond to the mounting protection and relief needs conflict-affected communities in Southeastern CAR. The goal of the program is to increase food security, enhance community resilience and strengthen the protective environment via community-based mechanisms for children, women and men affected by conflict in the Mbomou prefecture, including survivors, escapees, and host communities.

In this quarter, June 15 to September 30, 2013, the project achieved the following:

- Reinstallation of Mercy Corps sub office in Mbomou prefecture including recruitment of program and operations staff;
- Finalized baseline data collection, analysis and completion of indicator targets;
- Trained program volunteers and started child protection support and outreach activities to raise community awareness on GBV prevention and child protection committees in Bangassou and surrounding areas;
- Mobilization of protection committees and other community networks for effective protection monitoring and community sensitization on GBV;
- Started the Listening Center's activities and provided psychosocial support of LRA and GBV affected survivors;
- Conducted preparation activities of economic recovery and market systems sub-sector by an Emergency Market Mapping Assessment (EMMA) to assess the real needs in livelihoods restoration.

2. Program Overview

SERAP was designed to respond to the mounting protection and relief needs conflict-affected communities in southeastern CAR. Mbomou Prefecture has been particularly affected, following the repeated civil conflict and attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that have persisted in 2012 as well as new conflict caused by the Séléka rebel coalition. Mercy Corps will build upon the foundation of its current successful protection program in Rafai, Bangassou and surrounding areas, providing much-needed assistance in the areas of psychosocial support, gender-based violence (GBV)

prevention and response, health, and economic support to internally displaced persons (IDPs). This new program will enable Mercy Corps to provide continued urgently needed support to LRA conflict-affected survivors through interventions in child protection, agriculture, food security, and socio-economic support, as well as humanitarian coordination and information management. It will also enable Mercy Corps to continue to build the capacity of local organizations to respond to protection needs.

Expected Results:

- 33,381 vulnerable people, including 3,000 IDPs in LRA-affected communities will continue to have access to protection services, including prevention and response to GBV;
- 3,500 vulnerable people, including 2,000 IDPs in LRA-affected communities will have restored assets in order to promote livelihoods and economic recovery.
- 2,000 vulnerable people, including 1,250 IDPs in LRA-affected communities will have improved agriculture livelihoods and income generation opportunities.
- Surveillance information will be collected to provide timely and rigorous early warning and vulnerability information on emerging and evolving crises situations for 93,457 people living in the Mbomou prefecture, including 10,000 IDPs.

3. Security

During this reporting period, the project faced continued insecurity in the Bangassou zone. The military leader of the Seleka rebels stationed in Bangassou had set up many barriers at the different entry points to the town. This forced anyone moving across town to either pay a tax or pay in-kind with crops they had harvested out of town. He was arrested by the central forces in late September and hopefully this will lead to an improved climate of security in the Mbomou zone, which will result in higher participation during project awareness raising sessions, but also ensure program activities can be implemented. Over 100 men from regional security forces are now stationed in Bangassou and the program team has witnessed a general calm in the area at the start of October.

It is important to emphasize that the insecurity situation in Mbomou has created delays in the implementation of project activities. Since the insecurity refueled in Bangassou at the beginning of July 2013, two temporary evacuations occurred to ensure the security of project staff. In one security incident in late August 2013, a convoy of two Mercy Corps vehicles traveling from Bangassou to Rafai was attacked by armed, unidentified elements and two staff were wounded. These two staff and the other four staff in the convoy were immediately evacuated to Bangui. Both of the staff wounded received immediate medical treatment. Following this incident Mercy Corps' Regional Security Advisor came immediately to CAR and carried out a security evaluation in the area. As a result, Mercy Corps' standard operating procedures were revised significantly for the entire operating area of the Mbomou. Vehicle movements are now limited to a 5km radius around Bangassou town and Rafai town and activities have been redirected to be implemented within the radius.

4. Performance Summary

Award-level Beneficiaries

Cumulative Period Targeted		Reporting Period Reached		Cumulative Period Reached	
Total	IDP	Total	IDP	Total	IDP
93,457	10,000				

Progress to Date

SECTOR #1 Agriculture and Food Security		<i>Objective:</i> Agricultural livelihoods and income generation opportunities are strengthened for LRA-affected IDP and host households				
Geographic Area (s)		Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR, with particular focus in Bangassou town				
Beneficiaries Targeted		Total: 2,000		IDP: 1,250		
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)		Total:1500		IDP: 1500		
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)		Total: 1500		IDP: 1500		
Subsector: Improving Agricultural Production/Food Security						
INDICATORS		Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural input activities, by sex.		Male	Yes	1160	870	870
		Female	Yes	840	630	630
		Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Projected increase in the number of months of food self-sufficiency due to seed system activities/ agricultural input for beneficiary households.		N/A	Yes	2 months	To be measured at the end of the project	0

During the reporting period, Mercy Corps began training sessions on agricultural production with 300 of the 400 targeted producer households (1,500 individuals), most living in the IDP camp of Tokoyo in Bangassou town. Priorities for training were identified after participatory discussions with beneficiaries, and training sessions covered topics related to soil fertilization techniques, regional plant diseases, crop storage and good governance with regards to negotiating selling prices. The trainings were facilitated by agricultural agronomists from the Agriculture Ministry extension agency located in Bangassou with support from Mercy Corps agronomists.

In August 2013, Mercy Corps conducted an Emergency Market Mapping Analysis (EMMA) in order to guide the activities under the agriculture and food security sub-sector. The EMMA results concluded that it would be possible for Mercy Corps to intervene and reinforce local production of agricultural tools in Bangassou before giving out vouchers to the beneficiaries under this sub-sector. The reporting period was also marked by trainings and capacity building support to local blacksmiths in order for them to increase local production of hoes and machetes. It is to be noted that the project will be distributing vouchers for

specified tools produced locally by January 2014 with the assurance that the preferred quality tools will already be available without creating a local market deficit.

<u>SECTOR #2</u> Economic Recovery and Market Systems		<i>Objective:</i> Livelihood assets of LRA-affected IDP and host households are restored in order to meet household needs				
Geographic Area (s)		Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR, with particular focus in Bangassou town				
Beneficiaries Targeted		Total: 3,500		IDP: 2,000		
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)		Total: Not started		IDP: Not started		
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)		Total: Not started		IDP: Not started		
Subsector: Livelihoods Restoration						
INDICATORS		Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of people assisted through livelihood restoration activities, by sex		Male	Yes	1470	0	0
		Female	Yes	2030	0	0
		Other	NA	NA	NA	NA
Percent of beneficiaries reporting their livelihoods restored within three to six months after receiving support		N/A	Yes	75%	0	0
Total USD amount channeled into the program area through livelihoods restoration activities		N/A	Yes	19.6 USD /beneficiary (68,600 USD total)	0	0
Subsector: Microfinance						
INDICATORS		Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of people, by sex, or MSEs newly receiving financial services or continuing to receive financial services due to USAID/OFDA support		Male	Yes	189	0	0
		Female	Yes	261	0	0
		Other	NA	NA	NA	NA
Percentage of financial service accounts/groups supported by USAID/OFDA that are functioning properly		N/A	Yes	75% of groups	0	0
Total USD amount channeled into the program area through sub-sector activities		N/A	Yes	\$2,160	0	0

As of the reporting period, Mercy Corps has not yet begun the livelihoods restoration and microfinance activities planned under the SERAP project; however preliminary activities were conducted to sensitize 30 communities and identify beneficiaries for resilience group activities. As mentioned above, through complimentary funds from UNICEF, an Emergency Market Mapping Analysis (EMMA) was conducted in Bangassou to guide livelihoods restoration activities and identify solutions to the major disruptions preventing households from restoring their livelihoods. In addition, a consultant was hired and began work to develop the resilience group curriculum. In early November, program staff will be trained on the

resilience group curriculum and it is anticipated that resilience group livelihoods trainings will start immediately following the training.

SECTOR #3 Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management		Objective: Monthly surveillance data is collected to contribute to the national Early Warning System			
Geographic Area (s)		Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR			
Beneficiaries Targeted		Total: 93,457		IDP: 10,000	
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)		Total:		IDP:	
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)		Total:		IDP:	
Subsector: Information Management					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number and percentage of humanitarian organizations utilizing information management services	N/A	Yes	24	0	0
Number and percentage of humanitarian organizations directly contributing to information products	N/A	Yes	7	7	7
Number of products made available by information management services that are accessed by clients	N/A	Yes	12	2	0

Mercy Corps, in collaboration with Acted, Solidarités, International Refugee Committee, PU-AMI, the World Food Program and led by Action Against Hunger are the seven humanitarian agencies working in CAR to contribute to the multi-sector surveillance and early warning system. The objective of the surveillance system is to produce information based on a system covering the zones in which they are active. Mercy Corps' surveillance data represents information for the Mbomou prefecture, with a total populations of 93,457 persons. During this reporting period, Mercy Corps program agents were trained on how to collect surveillance data using mobile devices in August 2013. Staff learned how to carry out the surveys on digital tablets and were taught how to transmit the data electronically twice a month to the central system managed by Action Against Hunger. Following the training, Mercy Corps staff in Rafai and Bangassou selected the key markets in each town where regular surveillance data would be conducted. The first round of data collection for the surveillance system from Mercy Corps began in late September 2013. The first bulletin on surveillance data is scheduled to be produced by Action Against Hunger in October 2013. This bulletin will be produced bi-monthly. In the next reporting period, Mercy Corps will continue to collect data twice per month in both Rafai and Bangassou, and will continue to be sent and be included in the bi-monthly bulletins for CAR.

SECTOR #4 PROTECTION	<i>Objective:</i> LRA-affected populations have continued access to protection services
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Geographic Area (s)	Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR, with particular focus in the towns of Rafai, Agoumar, Selim, Dembia, Geurikindo and surrounding villages				
Beneficiaries Targeted	Total: 15,000		IDP: 3,000		
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)	Total:2659		IDP:532		
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)	Total:		IDP:		
Subsector: Child Protection					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of people trained in child protection, disaggregated by sex	Male	Yes	5662	432	432
	Female	Yes	8493	560	560
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Percentage of targeted children reporting an improvement in their sense of safety and well-being at program close, disaggregated by sex.	Boys	Yes	75%	0	0
	Girls	Yes	75%	0	0
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Subsector: Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of individuals benefitting from GBV services, by sex	Male	Yes	3500	659	659
	Female	Yes	3500	975	975
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Number of people trained in GBV prevention or response, by sex	Male	Yes	20	0	0
	Female	Yes	15	0	0
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Subsector: Psychosocial Support Services					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of people trained in psychosocial support services, by sex	Male	Yes	0	0	0
	Female	Yes	21	21	21
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA

During the course of this reporting period, protection monitoring and co-ordination meetings were conducted at program start with protection committees and community counselors in Bangassou and Rafai. A total of 33 protection committee members received refresher trainings on protection issues and were re-oriented to the scope of the new program.

In addition, the listening centers in Rafai and Bangassou were re-opened and psychosocial agents received cases of GBV. In this reporting period, the following types of GBV were received:

- Physical violence: 8 women, including one successful reconciliation
- Psychosocial violence : 13 women with 10 successful reconciliations

- Economic violence: 3 women, successfully reconciled.
- Sexual violence : 4 cases of which 2 were minor females and 2 adult women.
- Denial of resources: 5 cases of, which all 5 were reconciled.

In total, community counselors trained by the program managed to conduct 17 reconciliations between male and female partners.

With regard to the awareness trainings, the community counselors and protection committees, with technical support from the project officers, organized a total of 64 awareness trainings in different neighborhoods of Bangassou town and Rafai town, reaching . The various themes that were discussed during the sessions included: women's' rights, child protection, human rights, gender based violence, childrens' rights and the concept of gender.

During the next reporting period play therapy activities will be launched, including the training of play therapy mentors and start of play therapy group activities. Case intake will continue in the listening center of GBV and other cases in need of psychosocial assistance. Awareness raising activities will also continue in target areas.

5. Monitoring & Evaluation

The project reference data was collected during the baseline survey in August and September 2013. The baseline survey was led by Mercy Corps staff responsible for monitoring and evaluation in the project area. The surveyors who collected the data were locally recruited from each village and were trained on how to administer the survey questionnaires and the survey methodology. Due to insecurity in rural areas, the survey was limited to Bangassou and Rafai towns. Some of the key findings of the baseline include:

People that feel unsafe	Nearly 90% of individuals surveyed across Bangassou, Niakari and Yongofongo indicated that they "do not feel safe" in their communities, with the majority of respondents indicating the continued presence of SELEKA soldiers as the main reason why they do not feel safe
Knowledge of protection committees	An average of 65% of people had heard of protection committees and were able to correctly cite the roles and activities of protection committees, including community awareness-raising sessions, reference of vulnerable children to support structures, and implementation of micro-projects to benefit the community
Knowledge of child protection rights	Men and women surveyed across all four zones believe that children have rights that need to be protected even in difficult contexts
Knowledge of GBV issues	Compared to men, women's knowledge of types of GBV among survey respondents was much higher in all surveyed locations. On average of 88.5% of respondents across Niakari, Bangassou, Rafai and Yongofongo were able to successfully identify at least two types of violence that would be classified as GBV

The rest of the findings of the baseline evaluation can be found in the baseline evaluation report.

6. Coordination

Mercy Corps participants in regular coordination meetings in Bangassou with all the other partners in the area, including Merlin, Acted and Coheb, in order to coordinate information and activities and share important security related information. In addition, Mercy Corps is an active member of the South-East coordination mechanism led by OCHA held in Bangui to coordinate among all actors in the Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou regions. For the surveillance activities, Mercy Corps has participated in two coordinated training events in Bangui during this reporting period for the seven partner agencies conducting surveillance activities. The EMMA was also a coordinated effort for actors in the Southeast and the results of the EMMA were shared with the larger humanitarian community in CAR. Finally, Mercy Corps shares key information on the program activities and security in the South East at Protection Cluster meetings, GBV and Child Protection sub-cluster meetings and Food security Meetings held on a bi-monthly basis in Bangui.

7. Conclusion and Upcoming Activities

Implementation of project activities was restricted to Bangassou and Rafai towns, as a direct result of the security incident wounding Mercy Corps staff in August 2013. However, program activities have been re-directed to ensure targets are met with the restricted operating procedures. Mercy Corps will continue to closely monitor the security situation and if deemed safe, will extend activities to rural axes.

The next quarter will be focused on the following activities:

1. The start of play therapy activities in Bangassou, Rafai and surrounding areas
2. Continue the Listening Center's activities and providing psychosocial support of LRA and GBV affected survivors
3. Cash grants for livelihoods restoration
4. Provision of Agricultural Inputs through Cash Vouchers
5. Farmers Groups Trainings
6. Early Warning Surveillance System activities

**In annex: the report of Mercy Corps' Emergency Market Mapping Analysis (EMMA) conducted in August 2013 in communities of Mbomou*